

Neuwirth not to be judged by cover

By Joe Bustillos
Daily Titan

It had all the markings of an album found in the \$1.99 used-album bin at the MusicMart.

It was adorned with cheap black and white cover art with a shadow block printing hand-drawn by the artist himself. An unknown folk-singer from an obscure record label on an album that was literally recorded in the producer's living room. Fortunately, this negative first impression didn't prejudice me against spending an afternoon listening to Bob Neuwirth's "Back To The Front."

I made an amazing discovery that afternoon.

An album doesn't have to look good to sound good.

Actually, the album still sounds like it was recorded in someone's living room. Recorded "live" there are more than a few mumbled harmonies and inexact phrasings from the backup guitarists. What I mean by "sounds good" is the lyrical content of the album.

Comical and melancholic, Neuwirth serves up the tradi-

tional folk music fare of heartache, drunkenness and gambling with disarming integrity and selflessness.

One selection, "Private Eye," is a comical rendition about the game of relational cloak and dagger where the participants confuse their assumed identities and their "real" identities. The song is either about a blind date or some other clandestine rendezvous.

On another cut, "Venice Beach," Neuwirth invokes the image of a seedy rundown hotel

and its host of lonely men: "At the Hungry Arms Hotel where sorrow owns the halls, old men whisper in the lobby as the evening shadows fall. Across the faded message written on the wall, Adios in lipstick — there's no future here at all. . . Earring on the dresser, half of what was once a pair. By itself it sits, lost love souvenir."

It's refreshing to hear an album with substance. Even when the packaging screams Kmart blue light special.



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